Swiss prosecutors drop Vatican finance case after Holy See refuses key witness cooperation

Authorities cited a lack of cooperation from the Holy See and flagged concerns that the Secretariat of State influenced proceedings while acting as both accuser and authority in the case.

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Gaetano Masciullo

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LUGANO, Switzerland (LifeSiteNews) — Swiss federal prosecutors dropped a financial case against a former Vatican adviser after the Holy See refused to allow key witnesses to testify – the same witnesses its own Secretariat of State had complained against – prompting prosecutors to flag a blatant conflict of interest.

On April 30, Swiss federal prosecutor Annina Scherrer confirmed the case against Enrico Crasso – a longtime Vatican financial adviser implicated in the Secretariat of State's Centurion Fund investment scandal – had been discontinued for lack of evidence. She added that the Vatican had refused Swiss requests to interrogate key officials, among them Alberto Perlasca and Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, crippling investigators' ability to verify Crasso's account.

Scherrer explained that the requested interrogations "would have been of fundamental importance to verify the truthfulness of Crasso's statements," but that their effectiveness risked being compromised "by the influence of the private complainant and its interests in the case," namely the Secretariat of State.

Here, Scherrer suggested that the Vatican's involvement as complainant could have influenced the investigation because it was both the accuser and a party with institutional interests in the outcome.

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After directly viewing the decree, Italian journalist Nico Spuntoni was the first to report its contents in the Italian press with international relevance – in the newspaper *Il Giornale*.

Spuntoni confirmed the significance of the dismissal.

"The affair concerning the investments in the Centurion Fund had already surfaced in the Vatican trial on the management of the Secretariat of State's funds, best known for the later involvement of Cardinal Becciu," Spuntoni told LifeSiteNews, continuing:

> In 2020, for those same events, the Secretariat of State also filed a complaint in Switzerland against its former financial adviser, Enrico Crasso, alleging embezzlement and disloyal management. In the meantime, however, the Vatican tribunal's first-instance ruling issued in December 2023 – a ruling that the Vatican Court of Appeal has recently declared partially null – had acquitted Crasso of those charges, while convicting him of embezzlement in relation to other matters. Despite that acquittal, the parallel proceeding in Switzerland initiated by the Secretariat of State continued.

As for the meaning of the Swiss dismissal, Spuntoni added, "The reasoning set out in the decree is significant. Prosecutor Scherrer tells us that the Secretariat of State cannot be regarded as a private investor deceived by its own adviser to whom it had entrusted its savings. On the contrary, it must be considered a state entity and an experienced investor. But the most interesting aspect of the decree is that the Swiss judiciary explicitly complained about the Secretariat of State's lack of cooperation, particularly its failure to facilitate the questioning of key figures such as Alberto Perlasca, and in doing so highlighted a kind of conflict of interest."

The Swiss proceedings originated from a complaint filed on June 19, 2020, by the Vatican Secretariat of State against Crasso, who had long served as a financial adviser and was involved in managing investments, including those linked to the Centurion Fund. Swiss investigators examined allegations of mismanagement, fraud, and related financial offenses.

In her findings, Scherrer stated that the Vatican body should be regarded as an "experienced and professionally equipped investor," given the scale of the assets under its control and its access to specialized advisory structures. On this basis, the Swiss authority excluded the possibility of treating it as an uninformed or vulnerable party.

During the investigation, Swiss authorities sought to question several Vatican officials through mutual legal assistance procedures. These requests were declined after consultation with the Secretariat of State. In a note dated November 30, 2023, the Vatican authorities argued that such acts could not be carried out by one state within the territory of another, invoking principles of sovereignty. They suggested instead that written questions could be submitted for consideration.

Scherrer interpreted this response as evidence of institutional influence by the complainant within the Vatican legal system. She noted that the dual role of the Secretariat of State – as both complainant in Switzerland and authority controlling access to witnesses – created a potential conflict of interest.

For this reason, Swiss prosecutors decided not to transmit their questions or disclose investigative details, concluding that previous knowledge of the questions could compromise the integrity of the testimonies.

The Swiss prosecutor also recorded that the refusal of interrogations was received “not without surprise,” indicating the expectation of fuller cooperation given that the Vatican itself had initiated the complaint.

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The timing of the Vatican’s refusal is also noted in the Swiss decree. The communication was sent on November 30, 2023. It preceded the first-instance judgment issued by the Vatican tribunal by just a few days, in December 2023. In that ruling, Crasso was convicted of embezzlement in connection with other aspects of the broader financial case but acquitted on charges specifically related to the Centurion Fund – the same matters examined in Switzerland.

Therefore, the prosecutor seemed to suggest that the Secretariat of State may have known that the Vatican tribunal was about to issue a ruling unfavorable to its position, and for that reason decided to stop cooperating with the Swiss authorities. In other words, a strategic silence.